

## Dog Ban on Duxbury Beach Questioned

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

A resident questioned selectmen this week over the closing of Duxbury beach to dogs in the summer.

Judith Kiplinger of Pilgrim By-Way asked selectmen why they agreed to close the beach to dogs from April 1 to August 31, if the killings of the piping plovers this summer involved vehicles and not dogs. The

beach's owners, the Duxbury Beach Reservation, recommended the ban after state and federal officials demanded better protection for the endangered piping plover. Two plover chicks were killed at night in June after the beach was closed for the state police and Coast Guard to search for a

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missing swimmer. The plovers were found dead near the road that runs from the bridge to the Gurnet/Saquish area at the tip of the beach.

Kiplinger, who spoke at the open forum part of the selectmen's meeting, said that there were other measures that could have been taken, such as enforcing the existing leash laws, before instituting a total ban on dogs.

"It seems there is a lot that we could do before unilaterally banning the dogs," said Kiplinger.

Selectman Margaret Kearney is involved with the beach and has attended meetings with the Duxbury Beach

Reservation including the one that involved the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. She said that the federal laws that protect endangered species do not allow dogs anywhere near birds, such as the piping plovers. Closing the beach to dogs in the summer will help protect the birds during their nesting and hatching season.

Kearney also said that the killing of the two chicks was used as a springboard for state and federal officials to ask for the dog ban.

It was either close the beach to vehicle traffic or ban the dogs, she said.

"They made it clear to us that if you want to keep recreational vehicles on the beach,

then ban the dogs," Kearney said. "We really had no choice."

The town, the Reservation and the selectmen can be held liable for up to \$250,000 for the death of the piping plovers, said Kearney.

Kearney pointed out that the beach was open to dogs during the rest of the year.

Because this issue was not on the selectmen's regular agenda, they did not discuss it at length. However, Kearney said she would talk to Kiplinger and anyone else who had questions about why the ban had to be implemented. Kearney added that she could put residents in touch with those at the state level if they wanted to seek more information.